
THE GREEDY KING AND TRICKY MAN

Lcags so lhun 'grub ལཱགས་ལོ་ཁུན་གྲུབ། (Klu sgrub ལུ་སྒུབ།) (translator) and
Rgya mo skyid རྒྱ་མོ་སྐལ་ཡིད། (teller)

Rgya mo skyid (b. 1992) of Mdo ba Town, Reb gong (Thun rin, Tongren) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, China told me this story in an apartment in Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province on 21 August, 2016. She said, "When I was about five years old, my grandfather (Kun bzang, b. 1939) told me many stories such as this before we went to bed every night. I forgot many stories, but this story is still very clear."

There was once a greedy local king who collected taxes monthly. There was also a very poor man known as Tricky Tsag thul. The local king came to Tricky's home to punish him for not paying his taxes for several months.

When Tricky learned that that the king would soon arrive, he ran to his uncle's home, borrowed a piece of gold, returned home, and said to his wife, "While the king is eating here, I will ask you to check to see if our horse has defecated gold today. You will then bring this piece of gold and give it to me as the king is watching."

A bit later, the king arrived and scolded Tricky for not paying his taxes. Nevertheless, the king stayed for lunch.

Just before lunch, Tricky asked his wife to see if their horse had defecated gold. Tricky's wife went outside, soon returned, handed a piece of gold to her husband in front of the king, and said, 'What a small piece today!'

"My *bla ma*!" the king murmured and sat stunned, drooling over the sight of the gold, but he soon recovered and regained his proud bearing. Then his greed won out and he asked, "How can a horse defecate gold?"

Lcags so lhun 'grub (translator) and Rgya mo skyid (tellers). The Greedy King and the Tricky Man. 2017. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:115-119.

Tricky replied, "My dear king! It's easy! Just give a generous amount of flour mixed with warm water to a horse and then it will defecate gold in pieces as big as a human head."

Once the king heard this, he rode off without asking for his taxes. Meanwhile, Tricky laughed and enjoyed lunch with his wife.

Some days later, Tricky saw the king in the distance, heading to their home. Tricky told his wife, "Pour some water into our big pot, boil it, and then drop three grains of rice into the pot after the king arrives. Serve a lot of tea to the king. He will then surely have to urinate. While he is outside, pour three bowls of rice into the pot and boil it."

The king soon arrived and Tricky ran outside to welcome him. The king planned to take Tricky to his palace and punish him because his horse had just died from diarrhea from overeating flour mixed with warm water as Tricky had suggested. The king solemnly sat on a felt carpet while Tricky's wife dropped three grains of rice into the pot and said, "My dear king! It won't take long. Please enjoy your tea first and then we'll have a nice meal with rice."

The king sniffed and thought, "Will I eat these three grains of rice? Is that all they plan to serve?" After several bowls of tea, the king shouted at Tricky to hand him his leather boots and then he went outside to urinate.

Meanwhile, Tricky's wife poured three bowls of cooked rice into the boiling water. The king returned. After a few minutes, Tricky's wife uncovered the pot startling the king who noticed the pot was full of rice. He was so stupefied that he dropped the bowl of tea he was holding, which fell onto the white felt. It now seemed that the king had urinated on the carpet.

The king nervously inquired, "How could a few grains of rice become this much?"

Tricky replied, "Your queen doesn't know this?"

The king's face became very red as Tricky's wife explained, "Oh, dear king! You can do what I did today. Just put three grains of rice into hot water and boil it for a long time."

The king then returned to his palace. The next day, he invited four monks to the palace to chant scriptures for his impending hunting journey. He then decided to cook two grains of rice per monk. Based on his experience at Tricky's home, he was sure that was more than adequate. The king's preparations perplexed the monks, but they said nothing.

After the eight grains of rice had boiled a long time, the king confidently removed the cover of his copper pot, revealing nothing but grey colored liquid. Feeling flashes of heat and cold at the same time, he rushed to his horse and galloped to Tricky's home, determined to kill the trickster couple.

When he reached Tricky's home, Tricky was just returning with a wonderful fox skin hanging from his right shoulder.

The king totally forgot his anger when he saw the beautiful fox skin and immediately demanded, "Tricky, how did you get such a good fox skin?"

Tricky, answered, "It may be difficult for a king. I rode my horse and took a dog to the top of a mountain. Cold, wind, snow - many harsh experiences are there, but luckily my dog finally caught this fox."

The king impatiently demanded to borrow Tricky's horse and dog. Tricky agreed and suggested that the king keep the hunting dog on a leash, but release him when he strained at the leash, which meant it was eager to chase after game.

The next morning, the king took Tricky's horse and dog. After a long while, the king reached the highest mountain peak and waited for wild animals. The sun eventually began to set. Chilly wind struck his face and the dog and horse. It was unbearably cold. The dog missed its home and pulled at the leash in the king's hand. The king immediately released it and then stared at the dog's dancing tail till it disappeared. The dog, of course, ran home. Finally, the king was so cold he got on the horse and rode back to his palace.

The next morning, the king took some of his men to Tricky's home and took Tricky from his morning bed, locked Tricky in a

wooden case, and dropped it into a big river near the palace. He then happily concluded, "This man will not trouble me again."

The river carried the case to the shore of a small lake. Tricky then kicked at the cover of the case just as a half-blind Muslim man was passing by with his flock of sheep, leading a very good horse. The Muslim man noticed the sounds of Tricky kicking the case, came over, and pulled off the lid.

"Why were you locked in this case?" asked the Muslim man.

Tricky replied, "Before, I was blind, but a tantric specialist put me in this case by the lake. Now, it's amazing! I can see everything! Just everything."

The Muslim man then lay in the case as Tricky refastened the lid, and pushed it into the river. He then mounted the horse and drove the flock of sheep to his own home. A few days later, news of Tricky's new wealth reached the king's palace.

The king was shocked and amazed. He visited Tricky's home to learn how he had suddenly acquired so much property. Tricky said, "When I was in the case, it rolled on the surface of the river. I was dizzy, tired, and finally fell asleep. When I woke up from my incomplete dreams, I was standing on land, holding the reins of a horse with a big flock of sheep in front of me."

Inspired, the king ordered his servant to lock him in a case and drop him into the same river Tricky had nearly died in. The river seemed very hurried, smashing the case into stones with an unruly rhythm.

 NON-ENGLISH TERMS

bla ma བླ་མ།

Huangnan 黄南

klu sgrub ལུ་སྒུབ།

kun bzang ཀུན་བཟང་།

lcags so lhun 'grub ལུགས་སོ་ལུན་འགྲུབ།

mdo ba མདོ་བ།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན།

Qinghai 青海

reb gong རེབ་གོང་།

rgya mo skyid རྒྱ་མོ་སྐྱིད།

rma lho རྩ་ལྟོ།

Shaanxi 陕西

thun rin ཐུན་རིན།

Tongren 同仁

tsag thul ཅག་ཐུལ།

Xi'an 西安